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# Concrete company accused of pollution

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Times staff reporter

In 1986, federal agents learned concrete waste was being washed into Lake Union and the Duwamish River.

Yesterday a Portland company and two of its former employees were accused in federal court of 10 counts of violating federal anti-pollution laws in acts dating to the summer of 1986.

Named as defendants were Riedel International Inc., then the parent corporation of the Pioneer Construction Materials Co.; James A. Repman, then Pioneer president; and Ronald E. Summers, then Pioneer operations manager.

The charges are the latest in a series of more than two dozen prosecutions and investigations of environmental crimes being conducted by the office of Gene Anderson, U.S. attorney in Seattle, along with the federal Environmental Protection Agency and other governmental bodies.

Some of those prosecutions have resulted in significant fines and jail terms. Those include a \$1 million fine levied against the

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**Gerd Hattwig, EPA agent**

Wyckoff Co. in 1985 for polluting the Duwamish River and a \$40,000 fine imposed in July against the George Scofield Co. of Tacoma for illegally discharging concrete waste into the Tacoma City Waterway.

Riedel recently sold the Pioneer operations to a Seattle concrete company, with Repman and Summers now working for the new owners.

Court documents filed during the 1986 investigation, prepared by Gerd Hattwig, an EPA special agent, tell how suspicions about the illegal discharges dated to the spring of that year.

Richard Koch, an engineer with the state Department of Ecology, then began checking on the discharges from the Pioneer plants at 5975 E. Marginal Way S., along the Duwamish, and 901 Fairview Ave. N., along Lake Union.

Koch watched as mostly empty concrete trucks returning from deliveries were washed down.

"Koch personally ... saw contaminated waste waters leaving the plant via surface runoff headed for the Duwamish," wrote Hattwig. He added that Koch then met with Summers and told him about the need for a federal permit to continue such discharges.

"During the conversations with Summers, Koch was told the plant does not routinely discharge into the Duwamish and does not need a permit," Hattwig said.

Hattwig then began his own stakeout. On Aug. 27, 1986, for example, he watched as numerous truck wash-downs resulted in the concrete wastes streaming into the river.

"It appears a pipe is buried in a concrete wall. ... The pipe has a loose-fitting cover plate which appears more for concealment purposes than for blockage. ... On each of these occasions, an obvious, distinct cloud in the river occurs from the concrete chemicals," he wrote.

Samples of the discharges were tested and found to fit definitions of hazardous waste, partly because of their extreme alkalinity. In plants meeting EPA standards, such waste commonly is recycled or treated with acid for neutralization.

The 10 counts filed in the information prepared by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Marshall and Helen Brunner describe several discharges between May and August 1986, each a violation of the federal Clean Water Act.

None of the defendants would comment on the charges.

The maximum penalty for a water-act violation is one year in prison and a \$100,000 fine.

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